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CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S FORWARD

***"I am not a human being having a temporary spiritual experience,
I am a spiritual being having a temporary human experience."- John 4:14***

Dear friends,

20 years before we have started MKS with a mission to promote sustainable livelihood and holistic development and we are continuously working on this direction since then.

Our Dharamitra Research and Demonstration Center conducted trainings on organic farming in which farmers participated. In the field of NRM we are constantly working on the fodder development, soil and water conservation and livestock development. This year we have constructed loose stone check dams, anicut, contour trench, community lift and wells to solve the water problem in this area. These activities gave a potential amount of wage employment to the local inhabitant. For livestock development we have treated and vaccinated goats, cows, buffalos, bullock, this year.

Other than this we continued to work closely with Kathodi Tribal for their resettlement. "Bhomat Vikas Parishad" (*People's Organization*) continued to work towards its goal. This year a number of villages level meeting, zonal federation meeting and executive committee meeting conducted. This year MKS took local BVP leaders to an exposure tour.

Village grain bank operation and SHG roused to a greater height. This year MKS changed its strategy to celebrate "Women's Day". MKS invited different individual from govt. dept, local MLA and other leader and other NGO in the celebration. They interacted with women participants and enhanced their knowledge level in different arena. More than 1500 women took part in this celebration.

Another achievement for this year is that CCF has extended its helping hand to fight for child development and child rights in this area. MKS, on behalf of the people of this area, is extending its sincere thanks to CCF for this support.

Before concluding I would like to thank all those who have made it possible for us to take our work ahead and I look forward to their continued and greater support in future.

With best wishes

Madan Nagda

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Gandhi Manav Kalyan Society (MKS) is deeply indebted to a number of individuals, organizations and institutions that have made our work possible this year through their guidance and support. In its efforts to enhance the quality of life for the tribal individuals of the Aravali Hills, MKS realizes that it does not stand-alone. Behind MKS are a team of enthusiasts equally dedicated to the MKS mission and vision. Although it is difficult to include all of their names and contributions in this space, MKS profoundly appreciates their assistance.



A special thank is extended to the villagers of the Bhomat Region who continue to motivate and inspire MKS in all of its activities. They have participated in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of all of our projects, with tremendous passion and interest. Without their ongoing support, encouragement, and suggestions, the MKS presence in this region would be futile. As an institution, we continue to learn from and grow with the villagers, and they are often both our teachers and our students.

We express heartfelt gratitude to the WFI, SwissAid, CASA, AFPRO & CCF partner agencies for their support and involvement in our cause. Without their assistance, our work would not be possible.

This year, a number of individuals took the time to visit and observe our operations in the field. They often braved rough terrain and a harsh climate to witness first-hand the kind of work that MKS is engaged in. Many of them became our biggest fans and greatest well wishers after gaining a deep understanding of the situation facing the Aravali tribal villagers. They have our most sincere thanks.

MKS was also fortunate to have the assistance and support of government bodies at the block, district, and state level. The positive relationship that MKS enjoys with local government representatives was further enhanced during the course of the year, and we are grateful for their cooperation.

WORKING AREA PROFILE

The Bhomat Region

“Bhomat” is the historic name for the villages of the Aravali Mountain Range that fall within MKS’ working area. It covers 80 villages in and around the Jhadol and Kotda blocks of Udaipur district, with an average distance of 70 km from Udaipur City. The region is in a semi-arid zone, with scattered forests and plains among the mountains and undulating hills. July and August are times of monsoons, while the remaining 10 months consist of extreme dry conditions. Temperature variation is also significant, as the semi-desert conditions make for cold winters and hot summers.

The people of the Bhomat region are predominately scheduled tribes and Rajputs. The main tribes of the area are Garasia, Gameti, Bhil, and Meena. The primary activity and means of livelihood for these communities is subsistence agriculture, animal husbandry, and collection of minor produces from the forest. Families are traditionally large, with the average family size ranging from 5-7 members. They live in huts made from mud, cow dung, and bricks that are built into the sides of the Aravali Mountains. The villages are remote, traditional, and isolated from mainstream society. The quality of education, nutrition, sanitation, and health are poor, as the villagers lack both awareness of and access to resources. The villages are without electricity, running water, and adequate transportation facilities.



Natural environmental changes and deforestation over the past thirty years have reduced the amount of tree cover, topsoil and vegetation in the area. In the absence of tree cover and forest organic matter, the two months of monsoons cause a high tendency of topsoil erosion, especially in areas where farms are built into the hillsides. The dryness of the remaining ten months causes the clay-like soil to crack and crumble, thus making topsoil runoff during the monsoons even more severe. The high temperatures of the summer months cause additional disintegration of organic matter in the lands. The reduction in vegetation and organic materials has left large tracts of wasteland and non-arable pastureland behind. As the top twelve inches of topsoil are the most precious for land fertility and crop productivity, the quality of agricultural lands has diminished at an alarming rate, and the number of cultivatable lands has decreased significantly in the past several years.

Because of the fourteen-year drought, the water tables in the region have been lowering each year, streams and rivers that used to flow freely are now running dry, wells are empty, soil moisture is low, and drinking water for both humans and animals is scarce. The tribal



found them ill equipped to confront the drought situation, and, as such, have been suffering from widespread crop failure for the last several years. Food production has dwindled to a single crop, maize, which is insufficient to feed the average family, let alone earn a livelihood. The decrease in drinking water and food supplies has led to an increase in malnutrition, water-borne disease, vitamin deficiency, birth defects, sickness, and livestock mortality.

For the past several years, with no other option available, the Bhomat villagers have begun migrating to cities and nearby towns, abandoning their traditional lifestyles in search of employment. Since the vast majority of adults in the region have minimal or no education, they work for the smallest of wages, usually as day laborers in heavy construction jobs. It is not uncommon for men to migrate on and off for up to 6 months of every year in search of work. This trend has put increased stress on the village family unit, with the women and children left alone to take care of the fields, livestock, and house. However, the income earned from day labor remains insufficient to meet the basic needs and requirements of most tribal households in the Bhomat Region. With lack of any other option, reliance on moneylenders who charge exorbitant interest rates (up to 200%) has become alarmingly commonplace, and lack of awareness has rendered the tribal communities vulnerable and susceptible to exploitation by outsiders and middlemen.

This harsh environment of immediate, individual survival has left little room for children's education, basic healthcare, proper nutrition, village cohesion/unity, income generation, skill development, or capacity building. It is difficult for the tribal of this area to plan for the future and invest in a better tomorrow when the demands of the current day are so pressing. It is in this environment that MKS has been working for the past 20 years. MKS has worked steadily towards addressing the above problems, working alongside the community members to alleviate pressures created by environmental changes, and to provide awareness and capacity building for sustainable development. The 20-year history has shown that, though natural resources may be undependable and the environment often unforgiving, innovative ideas and creative solutions are possible. In this context, MKS has been successful in helping the tribal communities understand and confront their current problems, and motivating them to plan for and invest in a brighter and self-sustaining future.



OUR ORIGINS

In 1985, while acting as former literacy supervisor for adult education programs in the interior areas of Rajasthan, Madan Nagda was moved by the plight of the tribal and decided to act on his impulse. He began living with the tribal, chose Oghna as his base of operations. Coming from the Marwar region, Madanji was familiar with the area, the people, and its issues. Coming into daily contact with the local tribal, Madanji listened to their problems and saw their issues. This made the beginning of Gandhi Manav Kalyan Society. Starting with nothing more than a shoestring budget and an enthusiastic team of believers Gandhi MKS is now working with 80 villages of BHOMAT region in Udaipur district of southern Rajasthan.



MISSION, OBJECTIVES, AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our Mission:

The mission of MKS has remained the same for the last 20 years: “To achieve self-reliant and empowered tribal communities that have the ability to manage their own resources and are engaged in their own development process.” MKS envisions a society where tribal individuals have full awareness of the resources that are at their disposal, and have the tools to access and fully utilize these resources.

Our Objectives:

MKS has formulated its objectives based on the needs and requirements of the communities that it works for. As such, the objectives of MKS are as follows:

- To mitigate the effects of the continuing drought by developing and strengthening local awareness and practices of natural resource management.
- To promote and strengthen sustainable agriculture beliefs and practices through organic farming.
- To build the capacity of local individuals and communities to secure their own financial, social, educational, and agricultural stability.
- To encourage women’s empowerment by ensuring female participation in all programs, planning, and initiatives.
- To create self-sustained village- and regional-level institutions that have the ability to manage their own development
- To establish linkages between the tribal communities, government departments, and other civil society institutions.
- To ensure a solid education for each child in the MKS working area

Our Values:

MKS is a non-religious and non-political institution, and does not discriminate on the basis of caste, class, religion, political affiliation, or gender. Drawing on Gandhian philosophy and values, MKS practices and supports the principles of nonviolence, equality, social justice, ecological harmony, and self-reliance. Though the inspirations are vast and varied, MKS’ core value centers on the right of each human being to live with dignity and justice.



WORKING STRATEGY

Our Offices and Team

MKS works through a dedicated and determined team of 18 full-time staff members and 112 village-level volunteers. In accordance with the goal of self-reliance and empowerment, most of the staff members and volunteers are drawn from the local tribal communities. MKS believes that development initiatives will only work if the beneficiaries embrace and adopt the initiatives as their own. In addition, development projects that stem from the communities themselves tend to have a better and longer-lasting success rate. MKS also realizes the importance of working through local individuals in implementing development programs, as they can speak from their own experiences and situation. For the past twenty years, MKS has enjoyed tremendous success in empowering local community members to be actively involved in their own development process. Leaders emerge naturally when this method is adopted.

The MKS working area is divided into three geographic working zones within a radius of 20 km; Gejvi, Vas, Oгна. The head office of the organization is in Oгна village, and field centers are located in Gejvi and Vas villages. Field staff members are assigned to each of the zones, and there is an additional office team in Oгна. By remaining decentralized, MKS has been able to increase its local and grassroots-level impact, and stay in close contact with the Bhomat villagers.

In an age of increasing modernization, systematization, and high-speed communication, MKS also realizes the importance of a certain professional touch that can only be found in the cities. Accordingly, MKS has a city coordination office in Udaipur, where most official correspondence occurs. Access to items such as email, digital technology, the latest computer software, and sophisticated printing systems has ensured that MKS remains current with the changing times. In addition, a city coordination office makes communication and cooperation with government departments and city-based institutions much easier. Effective usage of the tools of modernization found in the city has only helped MKS in its efforts to uplift the village communities.

Our Strategy and Approach

When deciding to work in a new village or in a new issue area, MKS first assesses the level of community interest and enthusiasm by repeated visits and meetings. During these visits,



inputs of the entire community, men and women, are actively sought and then analyzed. Individuals who can serve as village leaders and motivators are also identified. Only with the support of the community members and the interest on the part of a few individuals to take a leading role is the decision taken to move forward.

The methodology adopted by MKS in its development initiatives varies from project to project and from village to village. Most projects start with a baseline village survey conducted by MKS field staff members to assess different characteristics of the village, including level of interest and enthusiasm for development initiatives. Next, a series of planning sessions with the village communities are usually conducted, to best determine the way forward. Depending on the results of those sessions, MKS decides which approach to take with respect to the village.

In most villages, the first step taken is an exercise called Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), which is performed by MKS field staff in conjunction with village members. In the PRA exercise, field staff members meet with village members and construct a social and resource map of the village. This exercise helps the villagers comprehend the “larger picture” of the problems that face them in an easily accessible manner. It also allows them to think beyond their current household situation and consider their collective problems, strengths, weaknesses, and solutions. At this meeting, the villagers and field staff make a plan for the development of the village.

The next step is the formulation of an individualized Village Micro-Plan. Based on the results of the PRA, house-to-house surveys conducted by MKS field staff, and discussions with villagers, a Micro-Plan for the development of the villages is made. Included in this Micro-Plan are the steps that will be taken regarding the development of the particular village. This comprehensive Micro-Plan determines the actions that are to follow in the village.

In most villages, the first initiative taken is the establishment of male and female Self-Help Groups (SHGs). The SHG, in addition to serving as a financial support system for the village, the SHGs serve as a platform for the villagers to get together on a routine basis and discuss their joint issues and problems. By facilitating village unity and group interaction, the SHGs strengthen the village voice and promote collective decision-making. SHG formation is an effective first step towards village and community awareness, self-reliance, harmony, and pro-action.

Field staff members make regular visits to the project villages to conduct meetings, monitor progress, communicate news and information, conduct village-level trainings, and to stay



updated regarding new developments in the villages. Villagers are invited to regular training sessions at the MKS headquarters in Ogha. Cooperation with government departments and other civil society institutions results in MKS villagers being invited to trainings in Udaipur City. Each year, MKS sponsors a certain number of zonal and regional activities (see the section on “Women’s Day”) allowing villagers from across the Bhomat Region to interact with one another, thus facilitating regional unity and awareness.

OUR ACTIVITIES

Though the mission and vision of MKS has remained constant through the years, its focus areas continue to adapt with the needs of the community members and the changing environment. During the 1980's, the focus was mainly on building and strengthening village groups, awareness building, channeling government resources, and organizing people for effective social action. In the 1990's, catastrophes such as reoccurring drought, deforestation, and exploitation motivated MKS to begin implementing physical activities aimed at improving the environment and the socio-economic status of the tribal communities. In addition, they directed their awareness-raising activities towards helping the tribal understand and assert their rights and privileges. Despite the evolution in focus, MKS has preserved its role as a catalyst, helping people to take charge of their own development process and to become capable of independently managing their lives and environment.

The main focus areas of MKS programs and activities fall into the broad categories of savings and credit, sustainable agriculture, education, health, and natural resource management. The specific projects that we are working on are:

- 1) Development of the Kathodi Tribal Community
- 2) Watershed Development and Drought Mitigation
- 3) Environmental Regeneration
- 4) Community Health
- 5) Local Self Governance
- 6) Women and Child Development
- 7) Sustainable Agriculture Research and Training

8) Human Resource Development

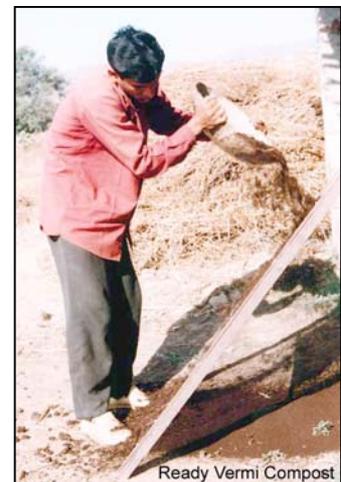
DHARAMITRA**"Friends of the Soil"**

MKS has adopted a unique strategy to bring the message of sustainable agriculture and ecological harmony to the Bhomat Region. Five years ago, MKS acquired a plot of land near its headquarters in Oгна, and started a fully functional organic farming training and research center. For the past five years, MKS has been demonstrating to their farmers that land regeneration, soil fertility, crop production, and a sufficient amount of agricultural income are still possible in the area, through the adoption of organic practices. The center is focused on organic farming patterns that will benefit the small and marginalized farmer, and decrease their dependence on outside markets. All of the agricultural methods used at Dharamitra are organic, and are conducted with the long-term health and fertility of the land in mind. The center is called "Dharamitra", which means "friends of the soil". Starting with nothing more than a shoestring budget, a few dry fields, and an enthusiastic team of believers, Dharamitra has grown into a 40-bigha (16-acre) center with units of organic farming, dairy development, and training and outreach activities. The tremendous success of the MKS organic farm has served as an excellent example for the Bhomat villagers that sustainable livelihood and economic security from agricultural production is still possible in this region by embracing organic agriculture and restoring the ecological balance of the land.

The different focus areas of Dharamitra are presented below:

Organic Farming

- The fields of Dharamitra contain the following organic grains and produce: Ginger, Turmeric, White Muesli, Yellow and White Maize, Mustard, Wheat, Gram (Chick Pea), Green Peas, Eggplant, Red and Green Chilies, Radishes, Okra, Cilantro, Garlic, Onion, Yam, Pulses, and other items.
- A luscious mango grove, several robust bamboo, neem and date trees, anis and mint plants, lemon trees, and other medicinal herbs are located in the Dharamitra fields
- Two fields of grass and fodder are cultivated for the Dharamitra cattle
- Organic manuring at Dharamitra consists of the



following: Decompost, Vermicompost, Liquid Manure (a mixture of cow manure, water, and jaggery), Green Manure, and Riverbed organic matter that collects after the monsoon rains

- Organic pesticide use at Dharamitra consists of two types of Neem Pesticides. One is a mixture of Neem leaves and water that can be used on all crops. The other is a mixture of Neem leaves, water, and cow urine that is used only on ginger, gram, and mustard.

Dairy Development

Dharamitra also has a fully functional dairy unit with 12 cows, 1 buffalo, and 3 oxen. The livestock are used for ploughing, dairy products, and manure. They have a separate shed and grazing area, and are provided with plenty of space to roam. The Dharamitra cattle supply organic milk to the nearby villages.

Training

Aside from being a fully functioning organic farm, MKS also conducts extension activities to bring awareness of sustainable agriculture to the small and marginalized farmers of the Bhomat Region. MKS conducts periodic trainings on organic farming and sustainable agriculture at its farm center. Though the trainings vary depending on the audience, each session includes discussions on crops, seeds, manure, livestock, and marketing. As part of the training, a tour of the Dharamitra farm and facilities is also conducted. The participants receive hands-on training in the different practices of sustainable agriculture, and are encouraged to replicate such measures in their own lands. They can also purchase certain start-up material from Dharamitra at a reduced rate.

While some of the produce generated from the Dharamitra fields is stored as seeds that are provided to the villages free of cost, the remainders of the produce is sold in the Udaipur market. MKS has been able to successfully market its produce and repay the loan that was taken for the purchase of the Dharamitra fields with the income generated from the Dharamitra fields. MKS has performed



The staff of Dharamitra

numerous cost/benefit exercises with regards to the Dharamitra fields, and has passed the findings along to the local farmers. By serving as a living example of economic stability

through organic agriculture, MKS has been influencing and assisting its tribal farmers to practice the same.

The particulars of this past year's summer (*kbharif*) crop are as follows:

SI. No.	Particulars	Qty. of Seeds Sown	Total Seed Value	Production	Total Production Value
1	Maize	32 kg	Rs. 450	3800 kg	Rs. 23218
2	San (Green Manure)	4 kg	Rs. 80	110 kg	Rs. 2200
3	Ginger	320 kg	Rs. 9600	1240 kg	Rs. 43400
4	Turmeric	800 kg	Rs. 7000	6000 kg	Rs. 48000
5	Museli	260 kg	Rs. 117000	2350 kg	Rs. 822500
6	Gawar	8 kg	Rs. 130	50 kg	Rs. 800
7	Green Gram	30 kg	Rs. 720	160 kg	Rs. 1280
8	Yam	160 kg	Rs. 1920	960 kg	Rs. 10560
9	Arvi	80 kg	Rs. 560	520 kg	Rs. 2860

Natural Resource Management

MKS realizes that the lack of water lies at the root of many of the village problems and concerns. Therefore, for the past 10 years, the core of MKS' programs has focused on watershed development. MKS has completed 2400 hectares of watershed development projects in 7 separate watershed sites, and is currently working in 7 villages of another



watershed site. It has been the experience of MKS that watershed based land development is a sustainable method to achieve economic security, food security, and an improved lifestyle for its target communities. Watershed development projects aim to maintain the productivity of land in upstream areas and reduce sedimentation hazards for downstream reservoirs/water harvesting structures. This aids in soil and water conservation, which in turn protects land resources, increases agricultural production, and generates large-scale rural employment. Most of the projects involve community construction of water harvesting structures, soil and water conservation structures, as well as

awareness-raising activities on water security. MKS has seen tremendous success in villages of project implementation in terms of increased crop productivity and variety, increased soil moisture, regeneration of lands, decrease in migration for work, decrease in dependence on moneylenders, and a pervading sense of self-reliance and unity. NRM activities are divided into the following categories:

- Afforestation/Fodder Development
- Soil and Water Conservation
- Livestock Development

Afforestation/Fodder Development

In order to address the problems caused by massive deforestation in the Bhomat Region, MKS conducts activities aimed at regenerating and protecting forestland. In 16 villages, MKS has formed Forest Protection Committees that are responsible for governing the cutting of village forestland. MKS encourages the planting of trees and saplings in individual lands, and encourages the villagers to plant community trees. This past year, 300

hectares of forestland was developed through soil and water conservation measures and tree plantations.

In addition to the lack of water, careless cattle grazing have caused a substantial reduction in fodder for village livestock. In order to increase the amount of fodder, MKS provided 600 kg of high-quality *Dhaman* and *Anjan* fodder seeds to selected villages this past year. Along with the distribution of seeds, MKS provides training on proper grazing techniques and lessons in fodder conservation.

Soil and Water Conservation

Soil and water conservation measures are directed at increasing soil moisture by preventing the monsoon rains from flowing away from the land. The construction of anicut, check

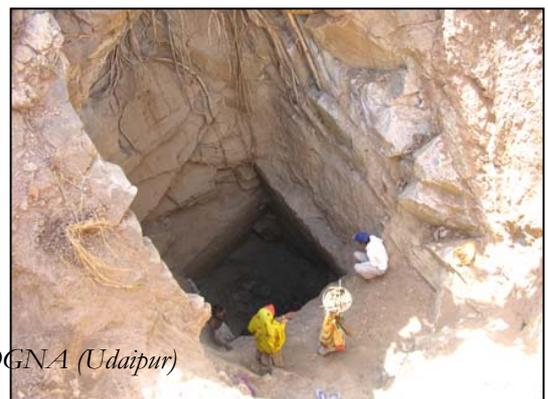


dams, contour trenches, and field bandings all prevent the monsoon rains from flowing down the hills at a destructive velocity. These three structures, constructed on different areas of land, increase soil moisture, increase se water tables in the area, help recharge nearby and downstream wells, and directly contribute to agricultural productivity by

allowing the villagers to take advantage of the monsoon rains. Well blasting and construction increase the amount of drinking and irrigation water in the villages, and installation of lifts ensure that the villagers are able to make good use of the well water. Soil and water conservation activities for the 2004-2005 year can be summarized as follows:

- Construction of 252 loose stone check dams in 3 villages
- Construction of 3 anicut in 3 villages
- Construction of 365 hectares of contour trenches in 3 villages
- Installation of 1 community lift
- Development of 32 wells in 9 villages

Although rainfall continued to be scarce this past year at a mere 367 mm, the effects of soil and water conservation can be witnessed directly in the agricultural fields of the treated villages. This year, individuals in 3 villages were able to take the *rabi* (winter) crops of wheat and gram for the first time in several years. Agricultural productivity for the *khariif* (monsoon) crops also increased, with one village seeing an average 25-kg/family increase in maize



production. Migration rates have also been falling since the start of watershed development projects and, this past year, 595 individuals found employment working in their respective villages. Well development activities caused an increase in the availability of drinking water in 9 villages, reducing the stress from village women of having to walk great distances for water.

The impact of soil and water conservation activities cut across all aspects of village development in the Bhomat Region. Increase in agricultural income results in reduced dependence on the moneylender and an increase in self-confidence. Production of both *rabi* and *kharif* crops results in food security throughout the year and an increase in disposable income. With this income, the villagers are free to plan for future events such as their children's education, weddings, and the purchase of additional livestock.

The social impacts of watershed development activities are also significant. Since MKS requires community contribution in the form of labor and raw material for construction work, the community works together to help support the projects. The village members select labor rotations, and equal participation of female and male members is guaranteed in all activities. This results in greater recognition of female contribution, and enhances gender relations. Since the construction of water harvesting and conservation structures benefits the entire village, input is required and taken from all the villagers. Working together causes villagers to put aside their differences for the benefit of the community. As a result, greater village unity and harmony is achieved.

Livestock Development

A second source income and livelihood for the villagers is their livestock. Livestock are used to plough the fields, and are an important source of dairy and manure. They can also be sold in times of insecurity to generate income. However, the villagers lack awareness regarding livestock utility, health and nutrition. As a result, many of the livestock suffer from seasonal diseases and illnesses such as nerve stiffness, liver flu, manje, skin disease, Haemorieaic Septicmia and others. As a result of these sicknesses and improper nutrition, livestock can become weak and unable to work. They then become a financial drain on the families, and impair the fieldwork.

In order to generate awareness of livestock health and nutrition, MKS conducts annual livestock camps for selected villages. In 2004, the livestock camp was organized just before





the monsoon rains, as this is the time of greatest disease prevalence. During this one-week camp, a total of 3500 goats, cows, buffaloes, bullocks and cows were vaccinated and treated for diseases. Along with medication, villagers are given training on livestock management. This includes information on the importance of vaccinations, the different breeds of animals, the importance of cow manure, proper livestock nutrition, the importance of building a livestock shed separate from the house, factors affecting the quality of milk products, and how to prevent animals from diseases.

Another important factor affecting livestock health is the availability of safe drinking water. Towards this end, MKS constructs cattle troughs adjacent to village wells hand pumps where excess water drains into the troughs. This past year saw the construction of three new cattle troughs in three different villages. The increase in water available along with fodder development activities has resulted in improved livestock health, nutrition, and food security.



SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Background

Chemical fertilizers and pesticides first appeared in the Bhomat Region when the effects of the drought started to become severe, around 10 years ago. Small and marginal farmers, desperate for crop production and unaware of the negative aspects of conventional practices, eagerly embraced high-yielding hybrid seeds offered by the Government at subsidized rates. In addition, chemicals such as urea and DAP were shipped to the area twice a year to be used on the summer and winter crops. Traditional grains were abandoned in favor of the high-yielding Government seeds, and centuries-old mixed cropping was discarded in effort to produce single bumper crops. As higher and higher yields of maize, mustard and gram were seen, more and more villagers began to adopt the conventional methods and abandon the traditional mixed cropping and the varied diet of their forefathers. While conventional and modern agricultural may be suitable for the large farmer in possession of plenty of water and land, it is extremely unfavorable for the small and marginal farmer.

The drought situation has only grown worse over the past 10 years, and the effects of conventional agricultural practices are beginning to be seen. The use of chemicals has damaged the already vulnerable topsoil even further, making it nearly impossible to grow crops in certain areas. In addition, chemical fertilizers require a tremendous amount of water for results to be seen, something that is not present in the Bhomat region. The switch to a single crop has affected the nutrition of the small farmer's family, and diet-related illnesses and conditions are now common. Crops grown from non-native hybrid seeds have seen widespread failure, resulting in huge financial losses for the small and marginalized tribal farmers. In addition, the relationship of the villagers to their lands has been dealt a blow, as they have lost awareness of their natural ecosystem.

With an increased number of individuals migrating away from their fields for an increasing number of months per year, awareness of and concern for the land is disappearing even further. Traditional knowledge and practices are being lost with each passing generation. The allure of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and "quick-fix" solutions is becoming even stronger, especially to a generation of farmers that spends up to eight months per year away from their lands. With only four months remaining to work the fields, results are quickly desired, and long-term sustainability is forgotten.

Our Efforts

Over the past five years, MKS has been focusing on bringing sustainable agricultural practices to the villagers in their working area. The 2004-2005 year saw a range of activities devoted to increasing awareness about sustainable agriculture, and promoting the practice of organic farming. 5 trainings on organic farming were conducted at the Dharamitra Center of Sustainable Agriculture this year (see the section on *Dharamitra*) with a total of 233 participants. The topics addressed at the trainings are as follows:

1) PHILOSOPHY

A dialogue on the philosophy and ethics behind organic farming and sustainable agriculture opens each training session. The relationship with the earth is discussed, as well as the health benefits, cost benefits, and total livelihood benefits of organic farming.

2) CROPS

This part includes discussions on crop rotation, mixed cropping, cash crops, and proper preparation of agricultural plots, and appropriate timetables for sowing, harvesting, manuring, and irrigating.

3) SEEDS

This section includes discussions on proper seed selection, different preservation techniques, traditional seed storage devices, seed quality tests, sowing methods, and revival of traditional seeds found in the Bhomat Region.

4) MANURING/MEDICINE

This session provides training on vermicompost, decompost, liquid manure, manure, the usage of natural biomass, and organic pesticide use.



5) LIVESTOCK

This session concerns the relationship of livestock to agricultural sustainability. Grazing techniques, fodder development, livestock health, and manure issues are presented.

6) MARKETING

Although the section on marketing is still being developed as MKS continues to perform research in this area, the basic principles of marketing are presented to the participants. The cost-benefit analysis of organic vs. inorganic agriculture is discussed.

In addition to the trainings that occur at Dharamitra, MKS has made sustainable agriculture a central topic in its field visits. During monthly meetings in each of its project villages,

MKS staff and village members discuss various aspects of organic agriculture. In addition to talking and presenting the different aspect of organic farming, MKS conducts on-site demonstrations in its project villages. In these meetings, organic farming is presented as part of the integrated approach of sustainable livelihood development, and the relationship between organic farming, watershed development, health and hygiene, proper nutrition, income generation, and environmental regeneration is addressed. By bringing the information and learning directly to the villagers' doorsteps, MKS is hopeful that the community members adopt the message of sustainable agriculture.



This year, MKS conducted an exposure tour for 19 progressive village farmers. The group consisted of 13 men and 6 women, all interested in practicing sustainable agriculture and organic farming. The group visited three organic farms in Rajasthan and Gujarat, including Bhaskar Save's internationally renowned farm in Umergaon. Bhaskar Save, considered the guru of sustainable agriculture in India, provided the villagers with a lifetime's worth of knowledge and experience, and served as a living inspiration for the sustainable agriculture cause.



The group gained valuable practical tips, and received much encouragement by seeing the dedication, motivation, and high success rate of other farmers.

MKS provides hands-on instruction and training with regards to organic seeds in the form of "improved seed demonstrations" that take place both in project villages and at the MKS headquarters in Ogra. During these demonstrations, selected farmers are given hands-on training with respect to the proper means of organic seed preparation and planting, and then provided with a certain quantity of locally grown seed for their home use, free of cost. This year, MKS demonstrated and distributed high quality yellow and white maize seeds in 22 villages, turmeric and ginger seeds in 18 villages, and vegetable seeds in 5 villages. In addition to seeds that are provided to project villages free of cost, the villagers can also purchase organically produced seeds from the Dharamitra fields at any time.

MKS also supports the construction of decompost and vermicompost pits in its project areas. In addition to providing training on pit construction and maintenance during sustainable agriculture training, MKS staff members assist villagers in individual pit construction. This past year saw the construction of 158 decompost pits by farmers in the

MKS working area. The construction of vermicompost pits was more difficult this year due to the high cost of worms.

This year saw the initial formation of a Bhomat Organic Farmers Network, a group of 25 local farmers all dedicated to the practice and promotion of sustainable agriculture and organic farming. The Network meets every month to share best practices in the field, plan for the coming month's activities, and offer each other support and assistance. The meetings are attended by MKS staff members also who discuss the latest findings in sustainable agriculture, provide marketing advice and linkages, and share information regarding national-level developments.

Revolving Seed Fund

The Revolving Seed Fund was set up by MKS using a Rs. 52,000 grant from SwissAid. The idea behind the Revolving Seed Fund was to provide agricultural seed security during times of drought and low food supply. In the first phase, MKS loaned Rs. 52,000 worth of seeds to several different villages. The villages repaid the loan in terms of seeds from the following year's harvest. These seeds, in turn, were loaned out to another set of villages, which repaid the loan in terms of seeds for another set of villages. In this manner, the grant money continues to renew itself. This last year represented the sixth installment of the Revolving Fund. There were a total of 21 beneficiaries in 4 villages for ginger this year. The total loan provided was 1560kg of ginger seeds, which had Rs, 39,000 cash value. The total production obtained from these seeds was 4615kg, which had a market value of Rs. 93,550. The villagers were able to pay back Rs. 32,000 of the loan, representing a 75% recovery rate. The 25% collective loss occurred because of seed failure in certain farmer's fields, due to the continuing drought conditions. The farmers who came out on the plus side spent the extra money on the purchase of oxen, the repayment of loans, and repairing of wells.



HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Human Resource Development is another major focus area of MKS. Since part of MKS' core mission and philosophy is to provide individuals with the tools to improve their own situations, MKS places much emphasis on capacity building, awareness raising, skill development, and personnel training. MKS conducts trainings at its Dharamitra Center on a regular basis. Experienced MKS staff members conduct most of the trainings. On occasion, interested and/or knowledgeable individuals from government departments, financial institutions, and other organizations are invited to help conduct the trainings. A list of the trainings conducted during 2004-2005 is as follows:

No.	Name of Training	Number	Participants	Topics Addressed
1	Watershed Development	2	80	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of Natural Resources • Roles and Responsibilities of Villagers • Soil and Water Conservation Techniques
2	Organic Farming	5	233	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organic Manure and Pesticide Use • Crop Rotation and Mixed Cropping • Seed Storage and Selection • Cost/Benefit Analysis
3	Staff Development	2	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and Documentation • Motivational Techniques • Roles and Responsibilities of the Social Worker
4	Panchayati Raj	5	211	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 73rd Amendment Explanation and Implication • Powers of Panchayat Raj • Roles and Responsibilities of Villagers
5	Self-Help Group	4	138	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper Account Maintenance • Monthly Meeting Record Taking • Interaction with Financial Institutions
6	<i>Bhomat Vikas Parishad (BVP)</i>	3	43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues Facing the Bhomat Region • Success Stories of Local Leadership • Interaction with Government Departments
7	<i>BVP Anti-Alcohol</i>	2	451	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of Banning Alcohol • Local Strategies for Combating Alcohol Use • Village-to-Village Planning
8	Leadership Development	1	34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to Assert Leadership in Local Situations • Practical Techniques to Motivate • The Qualities and Characteristics of a "Leader"
9	Skill Development	1	29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper Oral Communication Skills • Report Writing and Drafting • Organizing Meetings and Trainings
10	Livestock Health	1	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Importance of Livestock Health and Nutrition • Livestock Medicine and Vaccination • Proper Livestock Usage and Grazing
11	Women's Day	1	55	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme for the Annual Women's Day • The Importance of Women's Empowerment • Equality in Gender Relations



Monthly Village Meetings

Another part of HRD and Capacity Building are the monthly villages meetings that are held in each of MKS' villages. These meetings are attended and conducted by the relevant field staff member. During these meetings, the villagers discuss the problems, issues, successes, and progress of their village in the previous month. Women's participation is heavily encouraged during these meetings, as it causes the women to develop the capacity to speak in public and in front of men. The monthly meetings accustom the villagers to talking about their issues and problems, making it easier for them to address these issues on a large-scale and with government or other officials.

At these meetings, field staff (also called "community organizers") talk to the villagers about issues such as health and nutrition, organic farming, sanitation, education, Panchayati Raj, internal savings and loan, proper financial management, good governance, village unity and harmony, etc. The community organizers assist the villagers in addressing their problems, and help them understand the resources that are available to them. Through continuous intervention and strengthening activities, MKS is helping the villagers understand their rights and take action towards the fulfillment of their needs.

Monthly Staff Meetings

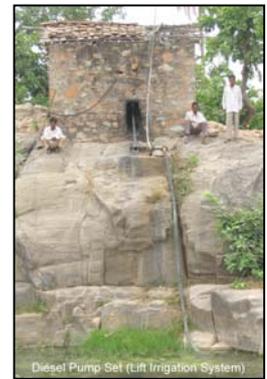
Each month, staff members from all three zones assemble for a staff meeting. During these meetings, the issues, progress, and plans of each zone are discussed and presented. This allows all members of the organization to remain updated on the activities of each zone. Coordination between office-level and field-level activities is also discussed. Each staff member is required to submit written reports on the activities of their respective zone. This builds the capacity of local field staff for report writing and proper documentation. During these meetings, new ideas and initiatives are addressed, ensuring that field staff remains updated on the latest advancements in the development sector.

KATHODI TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT

In the early 20th century, The Kathodi tribal community migrated from their home in Maharashtra state to South Rajasthan, in search of better economic opportunities. However, when they arrived in the area, they suffered from poor wages and high exploitation. Some Kathodis moved back to Maharashtra, but some remained in the South Rajasthan area. Being traditional hunters and gatherers, they found it difficult to survive in the agricultural belt of Rajasthan, and their living condition continued to deteriorate. Many of the families had settled in the Kotra and Jhadol blocks of South Rajasthan, right in the MKS working area. Realizing their situation, MKS decided to provide assistance and, in 1986, began to work with the Kathodis of Samija village, about 5km from the MKS head office in Ogra.

MKS worked consistently in Samija village from 1986-2000. Some of the achievements seen in Samija are as follows:

- Creation of a 21-member Women's Development Committee
- Establishment of a non-formal education center with an average enrollment of 54 children
- A 29-member Women's Self-Help Group
- Lobbying to legally secure 104 acres of government revenue land for 70 families
- Watershed Development Activities: Construction of gully plugs, field bandings, 2 hand pumps, and 1 anicut. Digging of a community well, and installment of a diesel pump for lift irrigation.
- Construction of 82 houses
- Creation of a community center where monthly meetings, cultural programs, and a Child Labor School are conducted
- Agricultural Development Activities: 42 agricultural demonstrations of *kharif* and *rabi* crops, 5000 square feet of Safed Museli planted, with Rs. 21,000 group income received, 15,000 saplings planted and 4,500 medicinal and other herbs planted. 4 oxen provided.
- Construction of a school and hostel through the Tribal Department, Government of Rajasthan





BHOMAT VIKAS PARISHAD

"Bhomat Development Organization"

Background

The Bhomat Vikas Parishad was formed four years ago, with the goal of providing a platform to the Bhomat Region villagers to raise issues of regional concern. Its membership consists of 1035 village men and 425 village women, for a total of 1460 members. Members are drawn from each of the three MKS working zones; Oгна, Vas, and Gejvi. Each member contributes a token amount of Rs. 1/month to support B.V.P. activities and meetings. Focus is on issues of local self-governance, the Panchayati Raj system, natural and common property resource management, linkages with government bodies, and women's empowerment. This year, special attention was given to developing and strengthening the three Zonal-Level Federations of Oгна, Vas, and Gejvi. Panchayati Raj activities this year have centered on developing a skilled level of Panchayat members who are ready to stand as strong and informed candidates in the next election. In terms of public interest issues, this year's focus has been on creating a common platform to discuss alcoholism, Rabari issues, Gavri, and PDS.

Activities

Village-Level Meetings

In each of the represented villages, B.V.P. meetings were organized and held each month for the entire year. There were a total of 560 meetings organized in the 56 villages. The main issues addressed this year are as follows:

- Education and school-related problems and solutions.
- The extension and successful implementation of Government Social Security schemes.
- Issues related to health, especially with regards to vaccinations, safe delivery practices, mother and child mortality rate, and basic nutrition.
- Issues related to alcohol, with special attention paid to women's roles and participation in the effort to ban alcohol use in their villages.
- Contact building and linkages with Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat Institutions

Zonal-Level Federation Meetings



Strengthening the Zonal-Level Federation was a special focus of B.V.P. activities this year. Three men and two women from each Zonal village comprise the core group of the Zonal Federations. This year, meetings of the Zonal Level Federations were held every third month throughout the year. A total of 18 Zonal meetings were held, spread out over the Ogha, Vas, and Gejvi Zones. The main issues discussed and actions taken by the Zonal Federations this year have been as follows:

- **Forestland Encroachment:** This entailed the identification of families who have the right to claim ownership of forestland if they have been living on the land since at least 1980. In order to assist them in their fight against encroachment and help them understand their rights, the Zonal Level Federations provided them with linkages to the Rajasthan network of Jungle Jamin, Jal, Andolan. Thus far, 740 cases in the Bhomat Region have been identified and submitted.
- **Alcohol Issues:** This year, special focus was placed on the problem of alcohol use and abuse in the Federation areas. The Vas Zone submitted a written paper to the police department regarding the alcohol issues in their area, and demanded that action be taken. In Ogha and Gejvi Zones, the Federations organized and sponsored two anti-alcohol rallies. The slogan for these rallies was “mutka aur bhatti phodo abhiyan”, which translates as “campaign to break the mutkas and stoves” (liquor is locally produced using mutkas and stoves).
- **Panchayati Raj Elections:** In preparation for the January 2005 Panchayat elections, the issues of campaigning, candidate awareness, and election proceedings were raised.
- **Public Distribution System:** The Federation discussed and raised awareness regarding certain problems and corruption within the PDS. They contacted the district administration and sent in complaints to correct the system so that it once again serves the needs of the people.

Executive Committee Meetings

The B.V.P. Executive Committee is the central body of the entire organization. 7 members from each of the three Zones (Ogha, Gejvi and Vas) make up the Executive Committee. Including three MKS staff members who attend each meeting, the total number of participants is 24. During each meeting, the different zones present the situation of their respective areas. They discuss community problems such as the status of forest/water conservation efforts, alcohol-related issues, the various government schemes and how to make them reach the villagers, and how to put the government schemes to use. This year, meetings continued on a regular basis, with each of the Zones benefiting from the learning and experience of the other Zones.

Exposure Tour



In February 2004, MKS took 35 local B.V.P. leaders on an exposure tour. The purpose of the exposure tour was to increase their knowledge with respect to leadership and tribal self-rule, by visiting other organizations that have seen success in these areas. The four organizations visited were: Adivasi Vikas Manch (Kotra), Bhakard Vikas Manch (Abu Road), Mazdur Kisan Shakti Sangatan (Bhim), and G.V.N.M.L. (Lapodia). Special subjects highlighted during this tour were the Right to Information and Land Rights.

After returning from the exposure trip, the participants were able to apply they learned in their respective areas. In particular, the “mutka aur bhatti phodo” campaign idea was taken from the Adivasi Vikas Manch. From Mazdur Kisan Shakti Sangatan, the participants learned different methods of ensuring government accountability for the drought schemes that are in the area. They were able to successfully contact the government and implement some of the schemes, using the techniques learned from the exposure trip. Also from Mazdur Kisan, the participants learned different techniques of raising awareness about forestland rights and water conservation. They conducted two rallies concerning forest and water issues, based on their learning from the exposure tour. Leadership qualities of the participants were visibly enhanced after the tour, and the participants have also extended their increased knowledge and awareness to other members of their villages and Zones.

Gram Sabha Workshops

This year, MKS organized four Gram Sabha strengthening workshops. 72 men and 61 women attended the workshops, for a total of 133. The major topic covered in these workshops was the role and responsibility of Gram Sabha in the Panchayati Raj system. To increase awareness towards this end, MKS prepared a field manual on Gram Sabha's role, and distributed it to the appropriate committees. The workshops also entailed group efforts to create and revise action plans on how to continue strengthening the Gram Sabha during the year.

Tribal Self-Rule Activities

To raise awareness about tribal self-rule, MKS conducted activities in 42 villages of the B.V.P. Special emphasis was placed on governance issues of the Scheduled 5th areas as laid out by the Indian Constitution. In addition, awareness on the PASA was generated. MKS organized rallies in Biroti and Amba villages to generate awareness on the Panchayati Raj system. Members from 42 villages attended both of these rallies.

Panchayat Leadership Workshop



In May 2004, MKS organized a one-day Panchayat Leadership Workshop with 78 Panchayat-Level leaders in attendance (including Sarpanch, Wardpanch, Panchayat Samiti and Jila Parishad members). The Additional CEO and the Jila Deputy Pramukh attended this workshop, which focused on problem analysis and solutions for panchayat members.

Impact of *Bhomat Vikas Parishad* Activities, 2004-2005:

The impact of B.V.P. and Panchayati Raj activities in the past year can be summarized as follows:

- Increased social mobilization of the people, as witnessed through high participation in rallies, Panchayat election campaigns, good attendance records at meetings, actions taken by the people, etc.
- Successful campaigns regarding Local-level and Zonal-level issues: i.e. 760 forest encroachments cases identified, new PDS licenses issued in two areas of Ognia Zone Federation centers due to high corruption and misuse of the old licenses.
- Increased awareness of education as evidenced by successful campaigns in 23 schools of the three Zones. Due to B.V.P. efforts this past year, 310 new teachers were added in the region. In addition, the dropout rate fell from 483 dropouts/1073 enrolled in 2003 to 417 dropouts/1590 enrolled in 2004.
- Increased awareness of health and liquor issues
- Increased political awareness, especially of the Panchayati Raj system, as evidenced during the Panchayat election campaigns.
- The successful reach and implementation of Government schemes and initiatives either through the panchayat or through direct Government department implementation programs.
- The role of various Government departments has expanded in many of the villages. In particular, the role of the Forest, Agriculture, and Education departments has been increased.
- A sense of collective leadership amongst both men and women has been developed in all 56 villages.
- The role of women has been improved and strengthened, especially with regards to the agriculture and drought-relief work.
- Increased activity of the village Forest Protection Committees: e.g. the Nandiya and Malawari F.P.Cs. have implemented a Joint Forest Management Program that is being sponsored by the Government Forest Department. The Kelthra and Narsinghpura F.P.Cs have successfully implemented pastureland protection measures. The Salar and Bara F.P.Cs. has implemented forestland development protection measures.
- Improved linkages with the Government Forest Department



OTHER ACTIVITIES

Village Grain Bank

For the past five years, due to the severe drought conditions, individual seed supplies have been decreasing. To create a safeguard against the loss of food supplies and facilitate financial awareness and security, MKS has encouraged the creation of village seed/grain banks. Each grain bank consists of 20 female members. Each of the members contributes a certain amount of grain (20 – 30 kg each) and MKS matches the total contribution (400 – 600 kg). MKS conducts training sessions for the women on how to operate the grain bank, its rules and regulations, progress monitoring, and loan repayment system. The women can take grain loans when necessary, with a 25% interest rate over a six-month time period. The grain in each village is divided between a numbers of different hamlets. The key to each hamlet's grain bank is kept in a different hamlet. This encourages trust and cooperation among the different hamlets, and eliminates any suspicion or competition among members of the same hamlet.

Because of the overwhelming success of the existing 4-grain banks, 6 new grain banks with 120 female members were started this year to make a total of 10-grain banks and 200 members. This year, 80 women have taken out loans from village grain banks. To date, there has been a 100% rate on the grain loans. Of the 80 women who took out loans this year, not a single one was forced to visit the moneylender. The village women have expressed an increased sense of self-confidence and self-reliance because of the grain banks. They have learned basic financial transactions and systems of accounting. In addition, they have gained the respect of the village men who widely acknowledge that the women are better suited to look after the household finances.

Self-Help Groups

The importance of Self-Help Groups in this area has been well established. The 14-year drought has dealt a severe blow to the traditional agricultural livelihoods of the tribal villagers. They have been forced to migrate and take loans from exploitative moneylenders who charge exorbitant interest rates (up to 200% per annum) to survive and support their families. This has had negative consequences on the education and health status of the children, and has resulted in decreased self-confidence and self-reliance. The idea behind the creation of SHGs is to help the villagers achieve self-reliance by creating village unity, developing an internal loaning and lending system, and creating a platform to discuss village issues and take unified village action. MKS has had tremendous success in forming and

supervising SHGs, and 7 of the SHGs are now self-sufficient, meaning they no longer require an MKS worker to assist them in their record keeping and financial transactions.

Today, there are a total of 44 active SHGs in the MKS working area, 18 male and 26 female. There were no new SHGs established this year, and emphasis was placed on strengthening and sustaining the existed groups. The Ognabank has been blacklisted for the past 3 years due to a mere 6% recovery rate on loans. As such, bank loaning to the SHGs has remained closed. This year, efforts to link with NABARD, and outside banks did not produce any results, as the banks are reluctant to support the SHGs. For these reasons, internal loaning has become a necessity in the SHG. The recovery percentage this year was approximately 45%. Although the SHGs continue to meet on a regular basis, migration has caused variations in attendance rates.

SHG Training

MKS held two trainings in 2004 for SHG office bearers. The trainings took place at the Dharamitra Center, and lasted for two days each. There were 42 male and 31 female participants, for a total of 73 attendees. Mr. Hitendra Singh from Jaipur (freelance consultant), Mr. Anup Mohan (general manager, NABARD), the bank manager, MAGB from Ognabank, the SDM, Jhadol, and 2 MKS staff members conducted these trainings. The main issues discussing during these trainings are listed below:

- Conceptual clarity of the SHG (importance, utility, etc.)
- Bank linkages and passbook maintenance
- Monthly savings
- Record maintenance
- Proceedings register
- Internal loaning
- Interest/Penalty

Convention of Women's SHG

In March 2004, a one-day meeting of all of 26 female SHGs was held. 300 women attended this one-day affair. The topics discussed included:

- The establishment of a Federation-Level SHG, and what it would entail
- The concept behind the creation of a Federation-Level SHG
- Discussions on the need for a Federation-Level SHG



Mahila Divas (“Women’s Day”)

International Women’s Day started several years ago in a village of Brazil, when several women gathered together and stood up for their rights. Their successes gradually moved across the country, and their struggle for empowerment became a worldwide movement in support of women that culminated in the annual observance of International Women’s Day on 8th March. This day is celebrated all over the world, and represents the continuing struggle and expression of women’s rights, awareness, and empowerment.

MKS has been celebrating Mahila Divas in its working area since 1992. This type of festival is especially important in the state of Rajasthan, where women typically have a lower status than women from other states in India. The goal of this festival, as envisioned by MKS, is to encourage women’s empowerment and self-reliance by giving them a space to express themselves freely. In addition, by inviting outside individuals, MKS hopes to create a dialogue between the village women and those from the outside regarding women’s rights and empowerment. By incorporating games, competitions, and cultural performances into the program, MKS also hopes to give the women a chance to enjoy, and to interact socially with women from all over the region. The festivities are not limited only to women, as MKS realizes that men also play a part in women’s empowerment. If men realize their role in helping uplift the women in their household and in the entire region, everyone stands to benefit.

The theme of Mahila Divas changes from year to year, with this year’s theme being health and education. Individuals were once again invited from Government Departments and other NGOs to participate in the ceremonies. Representatives from the Government ICDS (Integrated Child Development Scheme) spoke about the role of women in the health and education of tribal children. Two local MLAs attended, as well as many village leaders and panchayat members. This year’s festivities went smoothly, with over 1500 people in attendance. Good participation was seen in the rallies, the games, the cultural performances, and the speeches. The women exhibited enthusiasm and interest for the theme of health and education, and the outside speakers and guests spoke well regarding the topics of interest.

Feedback from the festival revealed that the message of women’s empowerment and self-reliance once again came through strong. The women enjoyed interacting and socializing with women from all over the region, and enjoyed sharing their different songs and dances during the cultural program. They were appreciative of the opportunity to gather together and express them, and are looking forward to next year’s festivities.



A Look Ahead..

In keeping with the tradition of the past twenty years, MKS will continue to evolve its programs and activities to fit the needs of the community. Our initiatives stem from an assessment of community requirements, and the feasibility of local individuals to implement development initiatives. The end of each financial year includes planning sessions for the upcoming years' activities and programs.

For the past several years, MKS has worked steadily on emergency drought relief measures to mitigate the ill effects of extreme water shortage. Tremendous successes have been seen in the area of drought relief, and many villagers are now reaping the benefits of various watershed development and soil and water conservation works. These villagers now have the ability to think about other areas of their life and their livelihood that they wish to improve. While MKS will continue to work towards drought relief for every village that it works in, the success of previous initiatives necessitate new efforts to improve and enhance the quality of life in its areas of watershed accomplishments.

Income Generation Program

MKS has plans for a comprehensive Income Generation Program in the Bhomat Region based on the produce generated from sustainable agriculture activities. MKS recognizes that the market for organic and natural produce is fast gaining ground in India, and the potential to tap into these markets exists in the Bhomat Region. Currently, the Bhomat Farmers are engaged in organic production of items such as maize, wheat, gram (chick pea), ginger, turmeric, safed museli, sugarcane, date, mango, chili, cilantro, garlic, and vegetables such as eggplant, tomato and okra. They currently sell the raw produce in the local village markets and occasionally in Udaipur. As there is no market specifically for organic produce in these areas, they are working twice as hard as conventional farmers and getting the same returns. This occasionally leads to doubt and a lack of confidence in organic farming, and the lure of chemical fertilizers is always waiting in the shadows.

Markets for organic produce exist in the nearby cities of Jaipur and Ahmedabad, and the demand for organic goods in large cities such as Delhi and Bombay is significant. While it is not feasible to ship raw goods and produce due to the possibilities of spoilage en route, the possibilities for manufacturing and shipping dry and processed goods are tremendous. MKS has already started to contact and correspond with storeowners and market individuals in Ahmedabad, Jaipur, and Delhi with regards to natural and organic goods from the Bhomat Region. The level of interest is high, and the idea has already been presented to the Bhomat Farmers, who are equally enthusiastic about the proposal.



MKS has started efforts towards certification of its Dharamitra Center and its small farmers by the Indian Government, Ministry of Commerce, as “India Organic”. Having certification by the Indian Government will open up additional avenues of marketing and sales for the small farmers of the Bhomat Region. MKS plans to secure a processing plant at its Dharamitra Center and train the Bhomat Farmers to produce items such as turmeric powder, chili powder, dried museli, ginger candy, papad, mango and garlic pickle, date chutney, and others. This will increase the income generation options for the Bhomat Region farmers, and provide them will new skills and capacities.

Organic Farmer’s Network

MKS has already formed a network of organic and progressive farmers dedicated to sustainable agriculture in the Bhomat Region. This network meets on the 20th of each month to share best practices, offer support, and plan for future activities. After establishing a base of organic produce processing and strengthening market linkages, MKS plan to transfer ownership and responsibility for processing and marketing to this network. MKS is working on securing a Green Shop in Udaipur City where the farmers will be able to sell their organic raw produce in addition to the dried and processed goods. The network can pool their resources and abilities into the formation of a Cooperative, where they will be able to market their products in bulk. This network will be trained by MKS in the basic principles of marketing, sales, consumer interaction, and accounting. The development of a Cooperative will give the small and marginalized Bhomat Farmers an increased sense of confidence, self-reliance, and empowerment.

Tribal Child Development

In cooperation with CCF, MKS has recently started a tribal child development program that targets the education, health, and livelihood of five hundred tribal children in the MKS working area. The children belong to 10 different interior and remote villages, and have been selected based on their level of need. The villages all lack basic facilities, and are among the most neglected and disadvantaged in the Bhomat Region. The initial surveys and planning have been completed, and the project will be launched within the next few months. By targeting young children, this project hopes to bring long-term livelihood stability and an improved quality of life for both the children and their families.



Wakal River Basin Renovation

Although MKS has seen good results in 7 villages of the current watershed development site, there is still much work left to be done with regards to water conservation and harvesting. MKS is currently at work in one watershed site in the Wakal River Basin area, and has plans to expand its activities in 60 additional villages of the Wakal River Basin. By implementing water conservation and harvesting activities in these selected 60 villages over a period of 10-12 years, MKS aims to have water flowing in the Wakal River for the entire year (it currently flows for 2 months of the year). A random survey of 21 villages has already been done, and strategic planning is currently underway. MKS is hopeful that this initiative will achieve the following goals:

- Provide a steady source of employment to village hands
- Increase knowledge and awareness of water harvesting and conservation in the project areas
- Involve the local villagers in their own development process
- Increase the amount of safe drinking water for both humans and animals
- Increase the water tables in the entire Wakal River Basin
- Achieve running water in the Wakal River for the entire year
- Allow the villagers to grow a variety of both *Kharif* (monsoon) and *Rabi* (winter) crops
- Increase the quantitative agricultural production of the Wakal River Basin lands
- Reduce migration rates in the Wakal River Basin villages

Enriched by the experiences gained till date, MKS will continue working towards the goal of self-reliance and empowerment of the Aravali tribal communities. Times change, needs change, and communities evolve, but MKS remains committed to supporting its villagers on their path of growth and development. There is much more to be done, many more villages to touch, and many more bridges to build. With the support of friends and well-wishers and a motivated and dedicated team of workers, MKS will continue to mobilize resources in an attempt to reach the unreachable.



CHALLENGES AND LEARNING

The start of each day brings with it a new challenge, and the close of each day brings with it a new learning. Though MKS is entering its twenty-first year, we are in a constant state of learning. We learn through both our mistakes and our successes of each day, and use both of them to enhance our effectiveness in the field as we face the next day. Experience has taught us to be in a constant state of self-examination, to admit our faults and difficulties, and to work tirelessly to improve our capabilities.

The year 2004-2005 was not without its challenges and learning. The rains continued to be scarce, with an average of 367 mm. Despite the successes achieved in building water harvesting and conservation structures, the lack of rains continued to hinder agricultural productivity. While the villagers received employment through the building of these structures and rates of migration were reduced during the periods of construction, they were still forced to seek labor outside of their village.

The biggest problem that faced the SHGs this year is the lack of cooperation offered to them by the local banks and financial institutions. While the groups can withdraw the money that they have deposited, they have been prevented from taking out anything in addition. The SHGs could have seen more success over the past year, but the lack of bank assistance slowed some of the SHG progress. MKS has made strong and concerted efforts to convince the local banks to revive the loaning system, and hopefully loaning will be restored soon.

Another challenge that faced MKS this year was the conclusion of financial support for two major programs. Although the potential for long-term sustainability in both of the programs has been well established, it will inevitably be a challenge for both the villagers and for MKS to make sure that no ground is lost. The future of the *Bhomat Vikas Parishad*, in particular, has been discussed at length with the villagers. As the only functional regional-level people's organization in the area, the organization has tremendous significance and potential. The villagers are ready to assume responsibility for its longevity, and MKS will be here to provide any necessary support.

Visitors During the Year



This year a number of visitors from different part of the world visited Gandhi MKS to understand the MKS working in the tribal dominated blocks of southern Rajasthan. MKS sincerely thanks them for their value addition. To name a few of them.....

A group of 22 visitors consists of students and Lecturers interested in tribal art and culture- School for International Training (USA).

A group of 28 visitors interested in organic farming exposure- Gramin Vikas Trust (Banswara).

A group of 8 members - Wells for India (UK).

Mr. Narendra Chand & Lucy- CASA.

Mr. Anand Shukla- SwissAid.

Mr.Lallubhai Desai- Manav Kalyan Trust.

Mr. Om Prakash Sharma and Ms. Angela Bishwas – Wells for India, Udaipur

Wells for India, UK photographers

Ms. Avni Bhalakia – Medical student from USA

Mr. Sharthak Paul (DCA- Delhi).

Mr. Rajendra Singh- “*Waterman*”

Mr. Kishore Saint- Environmentalist

Dr. Tej Rajdan- Ground Water Scientist.

Ms. Ginny Srivastava- Social Activist.

Mr. Shushil Sharma- Coordinator CASA

Ms. Vandana Kakare –Program manager AFPRO.

Mr. Babulal Kharadi- MLA.

Dr. Nikolal Grey- Chairman Wells for India (UK).

Mrs. Merry Grey (USA)- Trustee WFI (UK)

Mr. Robert (UK)- Ground Water Scientist.

Ms. Katharin (UK)- OXFORD University student. (OXFORD Volunteer)

Ms. Ana (UK)- OXFORD University student. (OXFORD Volunteer)

Mr. Anup Mohan- District General Manager – NABARD.

Mr. Amar Singh Kanawate- SDM Jhadol.

MNr. Jai Singh Rathore – DYSP Jhadol

Mr. Jayantha Bora – SRO- CCF Bangalore.

Mr. K.P. Rajendran - Program Director CCF.

Mr. Suvabrata Dey - Area Manager CCF Delhi.

PRAYTNA SANSTHA visits.

Ms. Sandhya Gupta - Volunteer from USA.